

# 2013 Wildfires



MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & CONSERVATION, FORESTRY DIVISION

[www.dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/fire](http://www.dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/fire)



*Medicine Rock Fire, Canadian helitack crews assist DNRC engine with initial attack*

This report summarizes the fire season from the perspective of the Montana DNRC and includes information about fire statistics, aviation, suppression, prevention, training, safety, finances, agreements and incident management teams.

Montana's 2013 fire season began early with fires in March. The Rumsey Gulch, first fire to order an incident management team, started May 13th! The Rumsey Gulch fire, located near Phillipsburg, was 350 acres, 20 residences were evacuated, and 5 homes lost. The largest DNRC fire in Montana this year was the Lolo Creek Complex, near Lolo. 10,902 acres burned, hundreds of residents evacuated, and 5 homes lost.

While the acreage burned this year was substantially less than our five year average, the number of fire starts was not. Firefighter safety, interagency cooperation and safe aggressive firefighting were instrumental to our successful fire season.

## Overview

- NO SERIOUS ACCIDENTS OR INJURIES
- 301 FIRES FOR 12,307 ACRES
- 98.3% SUCCESS RATE AT KEEPING FIRES <10 ACRES
- 3 COUNTY ASSIST FIRES
- 18 COUNTIES WENT INTO FIRE RESTRICTIONS
- LOLO CREEK COMPLEX ELIGIBLE FOR FEMA ASSISTANCE
- 10 HOMES LOST
- \$12.9 MILLION ESTIMATED NET STATE COST

## 2013 Wildfires



Lolo Creek Complex, fire jumping the road

*My family and I will always be indebted for the work they did, the courage they showed, and the incredible skill and professionalism they demonstrated in putting out the fire.*

- James Lee Burke  
Lolo Creek Complex



Shepherd Fire, county cooperative engine providing structure protection

### Northwest Compact and Montana National Guard

The DNRC utilizes additional help through agreements with neighboring states and Canada under the Northwest Compact. In 2013, a Canadian heli-rappel crew and two Canadian helitack crews were assigned in Montana to aid response and suppression efforts. These resources were positioned in central and western Montana to respond to emerging incidents. In addition, one Montana Army National Guard Blackhawk with support personnel was mobilized to increase the State's initial attack response and to provide support on large fires. The Montana National Guard also mobilized 80 personnel to staff 19 different check points on the Lolo Creek Complex, south of Missoula.

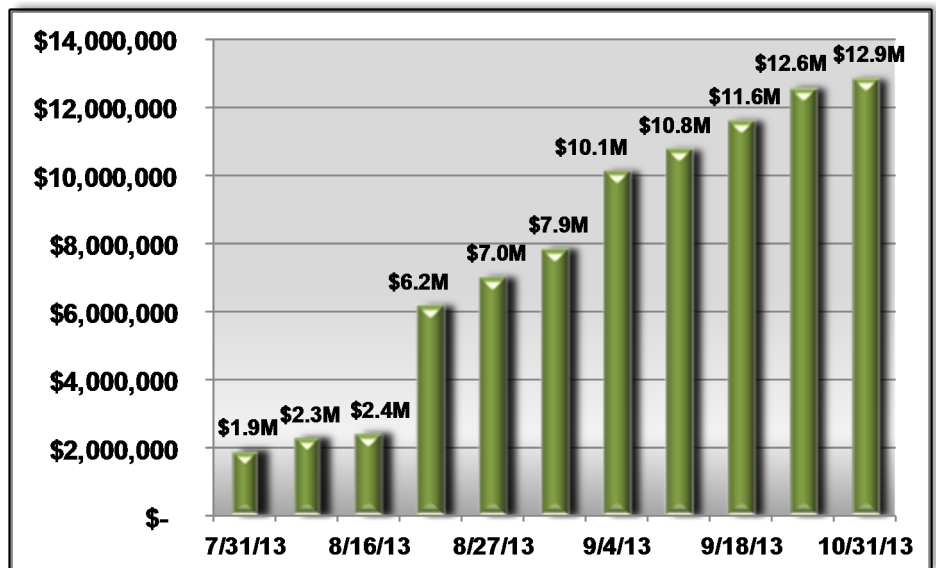
### DNRC Fire Season Statistics

<u>Year</u>	<u># Fires</u>	<u>Acres</u>
2013	301	12,307
Mutual Aid	87	
False Alarms	98	
Total Incidents	486	
County Assist	3	839
Direct Protection	298	11,468
% less than 10 acres	98.3%	
Homes Lost	10	

### FEMA Fires

FEMA provides partial reimbursement of suppression costs for wildfires that threaten significant populations through a Fire Management Assistance Grant. The Lolo Creek Complex qualified for these funds and received an estimated \$3.5 million. The total cost of the Lolo Creek Complex was \$12.5 million. This was a cost share split fire: DNRC 71% and USFS 29%. The estimated State costs for the Lolo Creek Complex totals \$5.4 million.

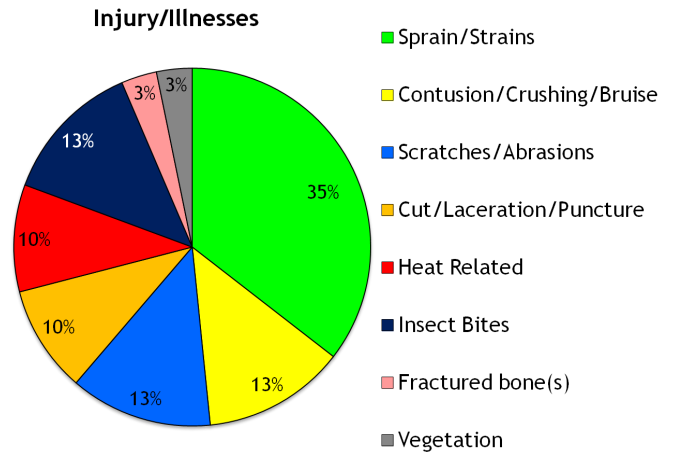
### Estimated net costs to the state of Montana: \$12.9 million



# MT DNRC

## Safety

Safety is always the top priority in DNRC's Fire and Aviation Management Program. During the 2013 fire season, there were 31 reports of injury to DNRC fire personnel. The majority (11) of the injuries were related to sprains/strains. All of the reported injuries were minor and did not result in significant loss of work time. Reported injuries are across all fire and aviation management functions, including aircraft operations, motor vehicles, hiking, use of hand tools, and work in fire camp. We will continue to learn from the injuries reported this year and where possible, take measures to mitigate the risks of those injuries occurring in the future.



## Training

Fire season provides young firefighters with a wealth of training opportunities and for those interested in taking on new responsibilities. DNRC provides training to approximately 2,355 firefighters each year. This includes everything from basic wildland firefighting courses to advanced incident command and fire line leadership. Many positions in fire management require completion of a position task book to demonstrate proficiency on an actual incident. During the 2013 fire season, 124 task books were completed and numerous others were partially completed and/or initiated.

## Aviation

The DNRC Aviation program logged 784 flight hours and delivered close to 1.1 million gallons of water and fire retardant. Five MT-205 helicopters are the workhorses of the program. During the summer, the ships are stationed in Missoula, Kalispell and Helena. Two are available statewide for initial attack support. The aviation staff is made up of six full-time mechanics, four full-time pilots, and fifteen seasonal pilots.

*Amazingly, by the time I saw the smoke plume a DNRC fire crew had already made entry by foot and put a line around the big fir that was struck... restricting the fire to a very small area. I was very impressed with both the DNRC and Dillon Volunteer Fire Department crews and the coordination between agencies.*

*- Ed and Linda Mooney*



Miller Creek Fire, Deer Lodge Inmate Crew



Helicopter field day training, Missoula and Clearwater Units



## Northern Rockies Interagency Incident Management Teams



Shepherd Fire, MT-205 Helicopter water drop

When wildfires exceed local capability to manage them, incident management teams (IMTs) are often called upon to provide assistance. These interagency teams include professionals from local, state, tribal and federal organizations and their mission is to manage the incident in accordance with directions from the host agency. The “type” of team (Type 3, Type 2, or Type 1) assigned depends upon the complexity of the incident, as determined by a number of factors. Type 1 IMTs are brought in to manage the highest complexity incidents. The DNRC is committed and values their involvement with the Northern Rockies Interagency Incident Management Teams. Team training, equipment and logistical support is vital to maintain the staffing and availability of these important fire management resource.

- 24 Assignments
- 315 total team assignment days
- Average of 20 days on assignment per team member

## Fire Prevention and Education

The goal of DNRC'S fire prevention program is to reduce human-caused wildfires, which, in turn, reduces property and resource loss, improves safety, and reduces suppression costs. Public outreach and education is the driving force of this program, this is primarily done through promoting and partnering with organizations and programs like Keep Montana Green, FireSafe Montana, Firewise Communities, Fire Adapted Communities and Ready, Set, Go!



Smokey Bear gives hugs to students during an educational event

### Restrictions:

Eighteen counties went into Stage I fire restrictions between July 31 and September 17. One county went into Stage II restrictions August 30 thru September 10.

### Severity Funding:

\$16,714 was requested and approved by DNRC to assist fire prevention efforts statewide and for the southwest Montana interagency regional prevention team.

### Prevention Team:

An interagency regional fire prevention team was formed in southwest Montana to assist with fire prevention efforts. The team was in place from July 31 thru August 30



Malta Hi-Line Fire Education Day, kids learn about the tools firefighters use when fighting fire



New Miami School students participate in Keep Montana Green's annual fire prevention poster contest